

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
OMB-01 HA-05 IO-13 /085 W
-----011980 070527Z /17
R 060855Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0050
INFO AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, SCUL, PGOV, UR
SUBJECT: RELATIVE EMPHASIS ON NATIVE LANGUAGE IN REPUBLIC
DRAFT CONSTITUTIONS

REF: MOSCOW 4916

1. SO FAR THE EMBASSY HAS SEEN THE TEXTS OF DRAFT
CONSTITUTIONS FOR THE BALTIC REPUBLICS, THE TRANSCAUCASIAN
REPUBLICS AND THE UKRAINIAN SSR. WHILE WE HAVE NOT TRIED
TO COMPARE THEM IN GREAT DETAIL, AND WHILE IN GENERAL
THEY ARE VERY MUCH ALIKE, IT HAS BECOME APPARENT THAT
THE SUBJECT OF THE NATIVE LANGUAGE IS BEING TREATED
DIFFERENTLY IN THE DIFFERENT DOCUMENTS. THE GEORGIAN
REPUBLIC DRAFT CONSTITUTION STATES IN CLAUSE 75:
"THE GEORGIAN SSR ASSURES THE USE OF THE GEORGIAN LANGUAGE
IN STATE AND PUBLIC AGENCIES, CULTURAL AND OTHER INSTITU-
TIONS, AND IS CARRYING OUT A POLICY OF CONCERN FOR ITS
GENERAL DEVELOPMENT." THE ARMENIAN DRAFT CONSTITUTION
CONTAINS EXACTLY THE SAME WORDING IN ITS CLAUSE 71 WITH
REFERENCE TO THE ARMENIAN LANGUAGE. THESE CLAUSES GO ON

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TO GUARANTEE FREE USE OF THE RUSSIAN LANGUAGE, AND
CONCLUDE: "NO PRIVILEGES OR LIMITATIONS IN THE USE OF
THESE OR OTHER LANGUAGES ARE PERMITTED."

2. AN EDITORIAL IN "PRAVDA VOSTOKA", THE GEORGIAN CENTRAL
COMMITTEE ORGAN, ON MARCH 26 OF THIS YEAR POINTED OUT
THAT THE NEW DRAFT CONSTITUTION "STRENGTHENS STATE

CONCERN FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE GEORGIAN LANGUAGE",
THUS PROMINENTLY DRAWING ATTENTION TO THIS PART OF THE
DOCUMENT.

3. NONE OF THE OTHER DRAFT CONSTITUTIONS WE HAVE SEEN TO
DATE CONTAINS A CLAUSE ON LANGUAGE COMPARABLE TO THE
CLAUSE IN THE GEORGIAN AND ARMENIAN DRAFT DOCUMENTS.
THEY ALL GUARANTEE PEOPLE'S RIGHT TO EDUCATION "IN THEIR
NATIVE LANGUAGE" (A CLAUSE ALREADY USED IN ALL THE
EARLIER CONSTITUTIONS) IN ANOTHER SECTION WHICH
LISTS THE RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS OF CITIZENS.

4. BY WAY OF BACKGROUND, THE 1936-7 CONSTITUTIONS GAVE
ALL THREE TRANSCAUCASIAN REPUBLICS SPECIAL PRIVILEGES
WITH RESPECT TO THEIR NATIVE LANGUAGES. IN A FINAL
SECTION ENTITLED "STATE LANGUAGE, COAT-OF-ARMS, FLAG,
CAPITAL" GEORGIAN, ARMENIAN AND AZERBAIDZHANIAN WERE
LISTED AS OFFICIAL LANGUAGES IN THEIR RESPECTIVE REPUBLICS;
THE CORRESPONDING SECTIONS IN THE OTHER REPUBLIC CONSTI-
TUTIONS DID NOT MENTION LANGUAGE. NONE OF THE NEW DRAFT
CONSTITUTIONS WE HAVE SEEN INCLUDES LANGUAGE IN THE FINAL
SECTION. CLAUSES 75 OF GEORGIAN DRAFT AND 71 OF ARMENIAN
DRAFT CITED ABOVE, FALL UNDER SECTION III, "NATIONAL-
STATE AND ADMINISTRATIVE-TERRITORIAL STRUCTURE OF THE
REPUBLIC." SO, WHILE GEORGIAN AND ARMENIAN REMAIN
RELATIVELY PRIVILEGED LANGUAGES, THEY HAVE LOST THEIR
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FORMER STATUS AS OFFICIAL LANGUAGES OF THEIR REPUBLICS,
AND RUSSIAN IS NOW EXPLICITLY ACCORDED RIGHT OF USE IN
OFFICIAL AGENCIES OF THE REPUBLICS. THE AZERBAIDZHANI
LANGUAGE HAS SUFFERED THE MOST SERIOUS DECLINE, JUDGING
FROM THE REPUBLIC'S DRAFT CONSTITUTION, AND IS NOW ON THE
SAME FOOTING AS THE LOCAL LANGUAGES OF THE OTHER
REPUBLICS.

5. WE WILL CONTINUE TO MONITOR THIS ASPECT OF THE
NEW DRAFT CONSTITUTIONS AS THEY APPEAR AND OF THE NEW
CONSTITUTIONS WHEN THEY ARE FORMALLY ADOPTED. TOON

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: TEXT, AGREEMENT DRAFT, CONSTITUTION, NEGOTIATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 06 apr 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978MOSCOW06871
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780150-0141
Format: TEL
From: MOSCOW
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780486/aaaacuth.tel
Line Count: 105
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 978d5cb5-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 MOSCOW 4916
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3055334
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: RELATIVE EMPHASIS ON NATIVE LANGUAGE IN REPUBLIC DRAFT CONSTITUTIONS
TAGS: PINT, SCUL, PGOV, UR
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/978d5cb5-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014